



File Code: 1950
Date: January 8, 2018

Dear Interested Citizens

The USDA Forest Service, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (RRSNF), Gold Beach Ranger District is providing notice of intent (NOI) that it will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Shasta Agness Landscape Restoration Project (Project), which would implement multiple landscape restoration actions on National Forest System (NFS) lands within an approximately 93,000-acre planning area.

The Project planning area is located on the Gold Beach and Wild Rivers Ranger Districts mostly within Curry County, Oregon. Tiny slivers of the planning area also border southern Coos and western Josephine Counties. The planning area includes NFS lands surrounding the community of Agness as well as parcels of State and Bureau of Land Management public lands. Planning boundaries were determined based on encompassing three watersheds: the Shasta Costa Creek – Rogue River, the Stair Creek – Rogue River, and the lower portion of the Lawson Creek – Illinois River. Additional project details and maps can be found here:
http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=49607.

In the summer of 2016, the Forest Service (USFS) provided a mailing distribution and legal notice announcing its initial scoping proposal for the Project's environmental assessment (EA). Subsequently, the USFS identified the need for a project-specific amendment to the silviculture standard on C-12 in the 1994 *Northwest Forest Plan*, which prohibits harvest in stands older than 80-years-old in Late Successional Reserves (LSR). The amendment would be spatially limited to the previously-identified project units proposed for oak and pine restoration, and it would be limited to the duration of project implementation. Though the original scoping proposal included thinning trees over 80-years-old in LSR, the USFS had not yet identified the need for the project-specific plan amendment. The thinning restoration actions that would trigger the amendment were sufficiently described in the original scoping letter, and none of the proposed action components have substantially changed upon determination of the amendment requirement or the shift to developing an EIS. Changes since the original scoping letter are mostly procedural in nature and do not reflect substantial changes to proposed action components, project purpose, or needs described in the original scoping notice. Due to complex circumstances identified during preliminary scoping efforts, the USFS now proposes to develop an EIS. This will ensure sufficient analysis while furthering the intent of NEPA. The USFS remains committed to the restoration intent and anticipates that this Project would result in beneficial landscape restoration.

The overall purpose of the Project remains: to restore resilience and ecological integrity to unique ecosystems and to aquatic and riparian habitats; to conserve and accelerate the development of late-successional forests while preserving species diversity; and to provide a diverse range of high-quality, sustainable recreation opportunities supported by an environmentally sustainable road system. Restoration actions include vegetation thinning treatments, prescribed fire, roadside sanitation, aquatic and riparian habitat enhancements,



sustainable recreation actions, and sustainable roads actions. A red tree vole conservation plan would be prepared to provide a reasonable assurance of persistence of this species at the watershed level. The amendment likely would be directly related to the following substantive requirements in 36 CFR 219.8-11: § 219.8 (a) (1) (i - vi); § 219.8 (a) (2) (ii and iii); § 219.8 (a) (3) (i and ii); § 219.8 (b) (1); § 219.8 (b) (2); § 219.8 (b) (3); § 219.8 (b) (4); § 219.8 (b) (5); § 219.9 (a) (1); § 219.9 (a) (2) (i - iii); § 219.9 (b) (1); § 219.9 (c); § 219.10 (a) (1); § 219.10 (a) (5); § 219.10 (a) (7); § 219.10 (a) (8); and § 219.11 (c).

The responsible official for this decision will be the Forest Supervisor for the RRSNF. This project is subject to both subparts A and B of 36 CFR 218, project-level pre-decisional administrative review process (objections). Decisions by the Forest Supervisor to approve project-specific plan amendments also are subject to 36 CFR 218 subpart A.

How to Comment and Timeframe: Participation is encouraged during this NOI and throughout the planning process. Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, transcripts, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for **30 calendar days** following publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register*, which is expected to be published on **January 5, 2018**. The publication date of the NOI in the *Federal Register* is the exclusive means for calculating this comment period. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source than the *Federal Register*.

In an effort to reduce paper use, the USFS emphasizes and strongly encourages electronic correspondence throughout this Project. Please submit comments at: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=49607>. Comments submitted electronically must be in plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), portable document format (.pdf), word (.doc or .docx), or an email message. Please put "Shasta Agness Project" on the subject line or envelope. Hard copy comments may be mailed, hand delivered weekdays (except holidays) between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., or faxed to:

Attn: Tina Lanier, Gold Beach District Ranger, c/o Barbara Cisneros, 29279 Ellensburg Avenue, Gold Beach, Oregon, 97444; Fax # 541-247-3641; or

Attn: Craig Trulock, Deputy Forest Supervisor, RRSNF, c/o Greta Smith, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504; Fax # (541) 618-2400.

Specific written comments, as defined by 36 CFR 218.2, should be within the scope of and have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official's consideration. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments during a designated public comment period will have eligibility to file an objection (36 CFR §218.5). For objection eligibility, each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments must either sign the comment or verify identity upon request. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the requirements in §218.25 (a) (3). Issues to be raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after a designated opportunity to comment (§218.8 (c)).

Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not afford the Agency the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents, nor will those who submit anonymous comments have standing to object to the subsequent decision. Specific written comments and submittals already received during the previously conducted designated public scoping comment period are part of the record and have been considered during further development of the Project and its draft EIS. Those received during that designated scoping period need not be re-submitted for the commenter to retain standing on those specific written comments in the event of possible future objections.

Access and review for documents related to information in this notice, including previously received comments, is available at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=49607. Information also is available from the Gold Beach District Ranger at 541-247-3600; the District Environmental Coordinator at 541-247-3613; or the Deputy Forest Supervisor at 541-618-2200. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf may call the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

After this NOI, the draft EIS is anticipated to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and available for public review and a designated 45-day public comment period by the winter of 2018. The EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the draft EIS in the *Federal Register*. At such time, detailed instructions for how to submit additional comments regarding the draft EIS will be provided. The final environmental impact statement is expected fall of 2018.

I appreciate your interest in public land management.

Sincerely,



TINA C LANIER
District Ranger Gold Beach